

REMARKS

Claims 1-20 stand rejected as anticipated under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) and/or obvious under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over U.S. Pat. No. 6,333,047 (“Wallman”). Wallman teaches “(a) system and method for allowing a plurality of investors to manage investments in a mutual fund or a directly owned portfolio of investments.” (Wallman, Abstract; see also, e.g., col. 1, lines 26-28). Claim 1 has been amended to more clearly define patentable aspects of the invention. As amended, claim 1 recites an invention that is substantially different from the collective ownership and management of investment securities disclosed by Wallman.

Amended claim 1 recites, for example, a step of establishing a group fund corresponding to at least one shared expense of the group. Wallman, on the other hand, fails to teach or suggest a group fund that corresponds to at least one shared expense. The Office Action suggests that Wallman’s “mutual fund” reflects the “aggregated contribution of a plurality of investors.” Office Action, p. 2. Accepting this interpretation only for the sake of argument, it is submitted that this “aggregated contribution” cannot properly be interpreted as disclosing or suggesting the shared expense of the group recited in amended claim 1.

Amended claim 1 further recites a step of receiving transaction details that describe a group expense and identify at least one of the plurality of group members responsible for the group expense. Wallman fails to disclose or suggest this recited step, and instead simply discloses steps of individual investors communicating orders to buy or sell investment securities. For these and other reasons, amended claim 1 is allowable over Wallman.

New claims 21-30 have been presented for consideration. All of these new claims depend from amended claim 1 and are therefore allowable over Wallman. Additionally, each newly presented claim recites additional elements not taught or suggested by Wallman. For example, new claim 21 recites that the group expense corresponds to the purchase of one of goods or services, and new claim 22 recites that the at least one shared expense that the group fund corresponds to is for a future purchase of

one of goods or services. Wallman, on the other hand, discloses only ownership of intangible investment securities, not the purchase of one of goods or services. See, e.g., Wallman col. 8, lines 51-60. Further, Wallman makes no suggestion or disclosure related to a shared expense being for a future purchase of goods or services, but is instead only concerned with the present value of its investment securities. See, e.g., Wallman col. 6, lines 22- 30.

New claim 23 recites that the transaction details describe a payment made by at least two members of the group on behalf of the group. Wallman makes no such disclosure, and in fact does not disclose that its individual investors may collectively make a transaction. New claims 24 and 25 recite steps of charging and paying group members interest, respectively, based on the timing of a payment made to the group. New claim 26 recites a step of determining that one group member is delinquent in paying his share of a group expense and removing the group member from the group. Wallman cannot properly be cited as disclosing or suggesting these steps.

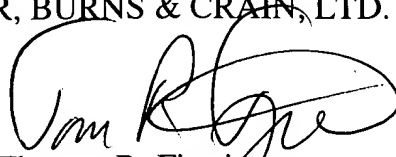
New claim 27 recites a step of determining whether one member of the group would like to ask other members to settle up, and if so to contact the other members. New claim 28 recites that the transaction details describe an amount paid by at least two of the group members on behalf of the group. Wallman does not teach or suggest settling up, nor a step of receiving transaction details of an amount paid by at least two group members. New claim 29 recites that the transaction details specify a plurality of, but not all of, the group members to assign the transaction to. New claim 30 recites a step of determining when any of the group members owes more than a predetermined amount of money, and subsequently reminding that member(s) of the group via e-mail to settle up. Wallman fails to disclose or suggest these limitations recited in new claims 27-30.

In conclusion, all pending claims in their amended form are allowable over Wallman and all other prior art. Timely examination and allowance is requested.

Respectfully submitted,

GREER, BURNS & CRAIN, LTD.

By



Thomas R. Fitzsimons

Registration No. 40,607

May 28, 2004

Suite 2500

300 South Wacker Drive

Chicago, Illinois 60606

(312) 360-0080

Customer No. 08668